



"See You at Mao": Godard's Revolutionary British Sounds

James Roy Macbean

Film Quarterly, Vol. 24, No. 2. (Winter, 1970-1971), pp. 15-23.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0015-1386%28197024%2F197124%2924%3A2%3C15%3A%22YAMGR%3E2.0.CO%3B2-P>

Film Quarterly is currently published by University of California Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ucal.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

The JSTOR Archive is a trusted digital repository providing for long-term preservation and access to leading academic journals and scholarly literature from around the world. The Archive is supported by libraries, scholarly societies, publishers, and foundations. It is an initiative of JSTOR, a not-for-profit organization with a mission to help the scholarly community take advantage of advances in technology. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

JAMES ROY MACBEAN

"See You at Mao"

GODARD'S REVOLUTIONARY BRITISH SOUNDS*

Introduction: Ideology

A fist punches through a paper Union Jack. Smashing through from behind, the fist *seems* to smash right through the screen as well. A voice declares: "The bourgeoisie created a world in its image. Comrades, let us destroy that image."

From its opening shot, Godard's *British Sounds* aims its critical thrust at *ideology*—at the worldview secreted by the mass media purveyors of images and sounds that reflect and serve to perpetuate the bourgeois capitalist mode of production and its concomitant exploitation.

Louis Althusser has recently reminded us (in a penetrating essay entitled "Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'état," *La Pensée* no. 151, June 1970, pp. 3–38) that although Marx's conception of the structure of society placed ideology at the uppermost floor, so to speak, of the cultural superstructure, nevertheless, in Marx's own terms, ideology (like all social phenomena) was determined in the final analysis by the infrastructure or economic foundations on which society was based. And Althusser points out as well the extremely important *economic function of ideology* in assuring the re-production of the labor force. Just as factory owners must constantly maintain and replenish their supply of raw materials, machinery, and the physical plants, so must they also maintain

and replenish the supply of workers willing and qualified to carry out the work expected of them. The terms "willing" and "qualified" are key ones, for in order to ensure that the potential labor force actually continues to render itself at the factory gates, ready to work, each morning from now till eternity, the ruling class must carry out a pervasive, permanent propaganda campaign aimed not only—or even primarily—at rational persuasion, but rather at *unquestioned, unconscious* acceptance and reinforcement of the existing social system and the values which are useful to that system. In other words, people must be trained to know what "society" [the ruling class] expects them to do and to be willing to do it. And this is where ideology comes in.

Cinema and television are of course by no means the only or even the most important vehicles of ideology. (Althusser lists, in addition to these, the schools, churches, courts, political parties, labor unions, the press, and—perhaps most important of all—the family.) But cinema and television have proved particularly useful ideological weapons in the past few decades, both because of the vast audiences they reach and because, as photographic media, they lend themselves so well to the ruling class's need to present the status quo as if it were *reality* itself. Photography, after all, is said to reflect reality. There's an old adage that 'the camera doesn't lie'; and whatever shows upon the photographic image—barring obvious tampering—is automatically raised to the stature of 'reality.'

As Godard states the problem of ideology in cinema and television, "the bourgeoisie creates a world in its image, but it also creates an im-

**British Sounds* was the original title—and as far as I can ascertain still is the "official" title—of the film which Godard showed on several university campuses in America last spring billed as *See You at Mao*.

age of its world that it calls a 'reflection of reality'.^{*} What he is pointing out here is the insidious confusion of terms perpetrated by the bourgeois image-makers. The image they create is an image of their own bourgeois capitalist society, but they seek to pass off this image as a "reflection of reality." Why? What is gained in this switch of terms?

If the bourgeois image-makers admitted that the image they present was merely a reflection of their own bourgeois capitalist ideology, this would be to admit the subjective, partisan, arbitrary, and mutable aspects of that image—and, by extension, of that *society*. Instead, they seek to inculcate a belief that the image they present is an objective one, that it is not partisan, that it is not arbitrary; that, in fact, it could be no other image precisely because "that's the way things are in reality." The ideological slight of hand that substitutes "reflection of reality" for "reflection of bourgeois capitalism" not only seeks to make bourgeois capitalism disappear as an *issue*, but also to ensure that bourgeois capitalism will perpetually reappear *in the guise of reality*.

And in the guise of reality, it is far less vulnerable: we can ask questions about how best to accommodate ourselves to reality; but we certainly can't ask 'reality' to go away. Reality, after all, is considered a *given*. We are told to confront reality, to look reality in the face—and we are left only the choice of coping with the given as best we can. Ideology, then, in a class society, is a weapon used by the ruling class to inculcate in the masses the acceptance as a given of the existing social system which privileges one class at the expense of another. Ideology serves to suppress the asking of questions about the social system and to assure that what few questions do get asked are questions

of *how* rather than *why*, of *reform* rather than *revolution*, of how to accommodate ourselves to 'reality' rather than why this particular social system should exist at all, much less be elevated to the status of 'reality' and accepted as a given.

The aesthetics of the photographic media also serve to reinforce this attitude of respect—almost of religious veneration—for 'reality.' The clear, untampered-with photographic image is considered 'sacrosanct': and using the myriad possibilities of the photographic process for anything other than a straightforward "reflection of reality" is invariably denigrated by our aestheticians, if not actually proscribed.

In cinema, the aesthetics of André Bazin effectively codifies (for whose benefit we shall see in a moment) all the realist rationale of photography [see, for example, Bazin's opening essay, which purports to be an "Ontology of the Cinematic Image"] and sets forth a whole series of 'thou shalt nots' in which such devices as superimposition, multiple exposures, slow motion, fast motion, expressionistic sets or décor, theatrically stylized action—and even most types of *montage*—are rendered suspect under any conditions and are downright *forbidden* under most. Their 'sin'—tampering with 'reality,' interfering with the 'clean,' 'pure,' 'virgin,' *reflection of reality*.

The religious terminology in Bazin's writings is by no means coincidental or even merely metaphorical. Bazin's entire aesthetic system is rooted in a mystical-religious (Catholic) framework of transcendence. The faithful 'reflection of reality,' for Bazin, is a prerequisite—and ultimately merely a *pretext*—for finding a 'transcendental truth' which supposedly exists in reality and is 'miraculously' revealed by the camera. Reality, if one reads Bazin carefully, sheds very quickly its *material* shell and is 'elevated' to a purely metaphysical (one could justifiably call it a *theological*) sphere.

For Bazin, all roads lead to the heavens. Even when writing on a film like Buñuel's *Las Hurdes* (Land Without Bread), which is a scathing documentation of the *material* condition of

^{*}Quoted from a text called "Premiers 'sons anglais'" (signed "on behalf of the Dziga Vertov Group: Jean-Luc Godard") published in *Cinéthique* no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1969), Paris, p. 14. [English translations of this and other Godard texts are available by writing to *Kinopraxis*, 2533 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley, Calif.]

a specific people (the inhabitants of the Valley of Las Hurdes) in a specific country (Spain) under a specific economic system (capitalism) with a specific ruling-class coalition (between the bourgeoisie and the Catholic Church)—all of which is pointed out with bitter emphasis in the film itself—nonetheless, Bazin manages to sweep the *material* dust under the table so fast you can hardly see it and immediately takes off for the stellar dust of the heavens.

Not once, it has been pointed out,* does Bazin—in his article on *Las Hurdes*—even mention the words 'class,' 'exploited,' 'rich,' 'capitalism,' 'property,' 'proletariat,' 'bourgeoisie,' 'order,' 'money,' 'profit,' etc. And what words do we find in their place? Large ones; broad generous concepts that are the staple of a long tradition of bourgeois humanist idealism—words like 'conscience,' 'salvation,' 'sadness,' 'purity,' 'integrity,' 'objective cruelty of the world,' 'transcendental truth,' 'cruelty of the human condition,' 'unhappiness,' 'the cruelty in the Creation,' 'destiny,' 'horror,' 'pity,' 'madonna,' 'human misery,' 'surgical obscenity,' 'love,' 'admiration,' *'dialectique pascalienne'*, [it would have to be *pascalienne!*] 'all the beauty of a Spanish *Pieta*,' 'nobility and harmony,' 'presence of the beautiful in the atrocious,' 'eternal human nobility in adversity,' 'an infernal earthly paradise,' etc., etc., etc.

And this is no unique case, either in Bazin's aesthetics or in bourgeois ideology in general. The broader, more general and generous the concepts, the easier it is to cover up the *absence* of a materialist, process-oriented analysis of human society that, if undertaken, would reveal some hard, unpleasant facts that could cause people to start rocking the boat. (As I indicated earlier, ideology functions at least as much in what it does *not* say—in what it *keeps quiet*—as in what it does say.†)

With this background, let us turn now to *British Sounds*, Godard's first serious attempt to break bourgeois ideology's stranglehold on

the cinema, to free the cinema from a misguided and mystifying aesthetics, and to construct a *cinematic dialectical materialism* that will unveil those hard, unpleasant facts the ruling class seeks to conceal.

As Godard defines the basic premise of this new, analytical approach to images and sounds: TELEVISION AND CINEMA DO NOT RECORD MOMENTS OF REALITY BUT SIMPLY MOMENTS IN THE DIALECTICAL PROCESS. AREAS/ERAS OF CONTRADICTION THAT HAVE TO BE EXAMINED IN THE LIGHT OF CLASS STRUGGLE.

Let us do this with *British Sounds*.

Analysis: The Dialectics of Image and Sound

In the first sequence—roughly ten minutes in length—the camera tracks slowly down the assembly line of a British Motor Corporation "model" factory where MG sportscars are being assembled. Meanwhile, on the sound track, there are at least three distinct elements: a man's voice-over reading of various passages from the *Communist Manifesto* fulminating against the alienation and exploitation of workers under the capitalist wage system; a little girls' voice-over memorizing of a Marxist catechism of important dates in the history of working-class struggle in England; and factory noise, which itself seems to consist of two distinct elements—a low-volume, nearly drowned-out base of synchronous sound that records the actual hammerings and machine noises of the assembly-line activity we see in the image, and very loud, harsh, and grating machine noise that seems to be overlaid on the sound track. The voice-over text is only intermittently audible even without the high-intensity machine noise; and, of course, when the latter is on, its shrieking metallic whine is all we hear.

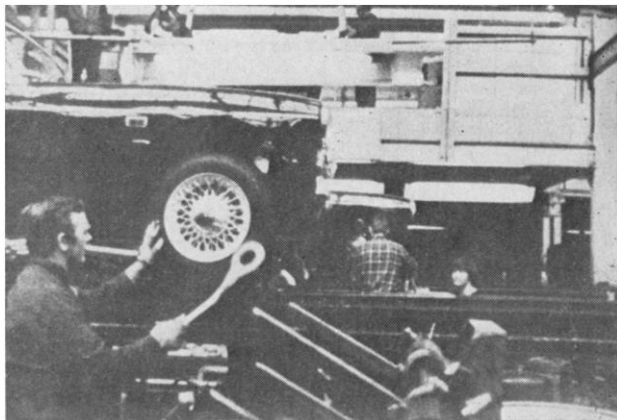
*See Gérard Gozlan's critical reading of Bazin in *Positif* nos. 46 and 47, June and July 1962.

†The same conclusion is reached—specifically in regard to the way literature is studied (and taught) in America—by Frederick Crews. See his article "Do Literary Studies Have an Ideology?", in *PMLA*, May 1970, vol. 85, no. 3, pp. 423-428.

We can begin to understand Godard's method in this film by asking why he might resort to sound-mixing for the high-intensity machine noise. After all, if one of the points he is trying to make in this sequence is that factory workers labor under excruciating conditions of noise, wouldn't this point be made more effectively if Godard simply documented the noise of an assembly line instead of making the point intellectually by manipulating the sound track? Well, perhaps, but only if you subscribe to the realist canons of those who insist that cinema must be a reflection of reality. It is, I think, precisely because this aesthetic attitude has proved so useful to the capitalist ruling class in disseminating bourgeois ideology that Godard, who wishes to unveil and combat that ideology, rejects its realist aesthetics and openly flaunts its rules.

Moreover, by playing with the relations among different elements of the sound track in this sequence, Godard makes a much more subtle and telling point. The physical alienation through harsh, intensive noise gets in the way of our understanding, in the film, the Marxian explanation of the economic alienation and exploitation of the worker under capitalism. Analogously, we can appreciate how, for the worker in the factory, the physical alienation through noise (combined with other factors, such as repetitious, mechanical gestures, fatigue, constant danger of injury, etc.) can be so brutalizing and benumbing that the worker (during working hours, at least) has no opportunity—or, for that matter, inclination—to ponder anything so seemingly abstract and complex as Marxist theory. If he's going to complain about anything, it's not capitalism; it's noise. He's going to demand better working conditions, or shorter hours, or higher wages, or medical plans, or all of these; but with all these immediate evils to lessen or eliminate, his attention will not be drawn to the greater evil—capitalism itself—which is the root of the problem.

And precisely because Godard imposes that machine-noise on the sound track and calls



BRITISH SOUNDS

attention to the way it serves to block out or impede Marxian political awareness, we are better able to understand not only the effects of that factory noise but also what may well be one of its causes. Factory workers today may be laboring under alienating conditions of noise, among other things, *not* because technology is incapable of reducing machine-noise, but because (A) noise-reduction is expensive and would cut into the ruling class's profit-margin, and (B) because, in any case, noise in the factory is useful to the ruling class in maintaining the alienation of the workers as a means of preventing them from focusing their critical attention on the capitalist system as a whole, and, instead, deflecting their attention to petty grievances which the ruling class can handle.

And unlike a straightforward, synch-sound documentary sound track of factory noise (in which the noise would simply be a 'given' for us to experience), Godard's manipulating of the relations among various sound blocks and levels of intensity enables us both to *experience* just how excruciating machine noise can be, and, more important, to *analyze* some of the more subtle effects—as well as a possible cause—of that noise by analyzing the relations among factory-noise, the worker, and the worker's ability to gain an awareness of his own alienation.

In the second sequence, unlike the first, issues are raised not so much by the relations among the different elements of the sound track as by the relations between image and sound.

What we see in the image is a nude young woman; what we hear on the sound track is an impassioned voice-over reading of a text on Women's Liberation. The nude is not shown doing anything interesting—just walking back and forth from one room to another, standing idly, talking on the telephone, or—in a visual pun on Marcel Duchamp's famous painting—descending (as well as ascending) a staircase.

The shots of her walking up and down the stairs are fairly long-range shots; those of her sitting on a chair and talking on the phone are middle-range shots; and the visual *pièce de résistance* of this sequence is a two-minute frontal close-up, as she stands idly, that frames from just above the navel to mid-thighs, with pubic hair up front and center in what has to be the boldest—and some would say most boring—"beaver" shot in the brief history of that budding genre of cinematic experience. But what Godard is exploring in this entire sequence is not the ways of sexually titillating the film-goer, nor the beauty of the unadorned female body, but rather the complex and ambiguous relations among nudity, sex, and liberation—especially as these concern women. And, as always, Godard's exploration is on "two fronts" simultaneously, for while he explores certain issues (in this case, nudity, sex, and liberation) he is also exploring different cinematic possibilities for dealing with these issues.

Take nudity and sex, for instance: they are hardly new to the movie-screen. Movies have always toyed with suggestions of nudity, if not nudity itself—giving us fleeting, peekaboo glimpses of starlets in bubble-baths, or, as sexual mores became less rigid, of starlets popping in and out of bed, but popping so fast that one hardly saw a thing. Slower, longer looks at nudity (almost invariably female nudity) were carefully contrived through elaborate camera angles and framing to avoid full frontal shots. Until roughly five years ago, the unwritten law in most European as well as American productions was "you can't show pubic hair." Lately, however, coming in the wake, I suppose, of nudity onstage, the movies have, for the mo-

ment at least, relaxed their vigilance on pubic hair—and on a lot of other things as well—with the result that there is now a rash of 'erotic' films that show anything and (preferably) everything, and there is also a freer, franker acceptance now of frontal nudity in the traditional 'art-film' and 'mature adult-film.'

But to Godard, it is clear, the question of what, or how much is shown, is only part of the issue where nudity is concerned—and the question of *how* is really far more important. If nudity is simply used as a come-on, then it serves to exploit both the audience and the actors and actresses concerned. Moreover, if the undraped female body is simply offered up as a sex-object for male-chauvinist consumption, then the exploitation of women is perpetuated and reinforced.

Here again, seeking to combat the reigning ideology, Godard rejects its conventions and flaunts its rules. He systematically excludes from this sequence all the usual appurtenances of sex-on-the-screen. Instead of showing the woman undressing (the old strip-tease routine), Godard has the woman appear in the nude from start to finish. And she is alone throughout the entire sequence: her nudity is casually, unself-consciously, for herself, for her own free-and-easy feeling of liberation; it is not, as movies invariably have it, female nudity for a man's waiting lust or for any form of sexual activity whatsoever—be it hetero, homo, or auto. In fact, at no point are we, the audience, given the voyeuristic titillation of watching even the old "frustrated longing" bit (heavy sighing, restless tossing, etc.) of the woman-at-home-alone scene (like the one that awkwardly opens *Bonnie and Clyde*)—a scene which always functions as the cinematic correlative of that archetypal male-chauvinist cliché, "All she needs is a good fuck!"

Godard's nude young woman may assert that fucking can help some of her problems, but she's talking of taking the initiative, liberating herself from dependency relationships, of "fucking around" whenever and with whomever she feels like it. Not letting herself get in the situa-

tion where "all she needs is a good fuck" might mean doing just what males have always done or had the right to do, and that is "fucking around"—an activity which the double standard (another male-chauvinist ploy) has always declared off-bounds for women.

And as for cinema's hypocritical attitudes toward pubic hair, Godard not only shows us pubic hair, one could almost say that he rubs our noses in it—in the two-minute close-up—if it weren't for the fact, however, that he simultaneously distances us from this shot by the dialectical interplay he sets up between image and sound. Throughout this sequence, image and sound serve to call each other into question and to raise questions in our minds concerning the relations between the nudity and potential sex-content that we see in the image and, on the other hand, the struggle to eliminate exploitation of one sex by another that we hear advocated on the sound track. Ultimately, of course, this dialectical interplay transcends the immediate issue of Women's Liberation and raises questions concerning the relations between sexual behavior and political behavior in general—with cryptic interjections (both aural and visual—male voice over and hand-written placards) that suggest parallels between "sex-perversion and Stalinism," or "concealing one's sex and keeping secret the decisions of workers' councils," or, finally—to sum up what this particular sequence is all about, "Freudian revolution and Marxist sexuality."

As usual, Godard doesn't spell out what might be meant by these terms; but within the context of this sequence in the film it is not difficult to grasp the point that political liberation must also be conceived in the light of psycho-sexual liberation, and vice versa. And as for the way these issues are presented to the public, it is clear that sex and nudity on stage and screen, while promoted as vehicles of liberation (and undoubtedly helping to liberate our society from old puritanical attitudes towards sex), are nonetheless very likely to be working counter to the much-needed liberation

of women from the male-chauvinist attitudes that tend to limit women's free development and to maintain them in a situation of exploitation. Moreover, with sex being used to sell us everything from a toothbrush to an automobile, there is every reason to fear that the much-touted "sexual revolution," in spite of its positive aspects, is actually the trump card of the reactionary ruling class which seeks to develop a hedonistic, pleasure-seeking society that will buy ever greater quantities of the sexual status-symbols which so many consumer products have become. Taking the complexity of the situation into account, unveiling the female body is only an infinitesimally small part of the struggle for liberation—and it is only truly liberating if it helps to unveil the ideology which exploits even women's nudity.

Before moving on to the next sequence, it should be pointed out that although the issues in this "Women's Lib" sequence are raised primarily through the relations between image and sound, nonetheless, some important questions are raised through the relations among the various elements on the sound track. In fact, a number of questions are raised through the use of what might be called *unheard sound*. I am thinking here of the telephone conversation, of which we hear only the half spoken by the nude young woman we see in the image. We wonder not only what the voice on the other end of the line is saying (and perhaps whose voice it is), but also what is the relation between the words we do hear and those we don't hear. Partly because of the way the nude young woman speaks, and partly because of our past experience of the way people in recent Godard films repeat words that are fed to them by someone else (especially through an electronic communications medium—in this case, the telephone); we are strangely suspicious (and meant to be so, I am sure) that the nude is repeating or improvising on words that are being fed to her by the voice (Godard's perhaps?) at the other end of the line.

And if this is the case, what is the relation of the words the woman is saying to her own

thoughts on the subject of Women's Liberation? And, finally—to be ultra-skeptical (as again I am sure we are meant to be in watching Godard's latest films)—what is the relation of the words the nude young woman is saying not just to her own *thoughts* on the advisability of "fucking around," but also to her *actions*? In short, synch-sound may be used to record the nude young woman's voice, but it's at least a possibility that the words might be "out of synch" with either her own thoughts or actions, or both. And this possibility creates a certain healthy distance from the very simplistic "fucking around" solution which the girl so blithely advocates.

In the next sequence as well, the notion of "synch-sound" is somewhat problematic, for while there is no manipulation of the sound track during the crude, ranting, ultra-right-wing speech of the TV news-commentator we see in the image, nevertheless, questions arise. "Whose words are these?" . . . "Who is speaking?" . . . and "For whom?" There is a strange incongruity between the words that are spoken and the young man who speaks them. Not that he doesn't look like the type to assert such racist and fascist opinions (on the contrary, with his football-player shoulders, large close-cropped head, the narrow gap between his eyes and the wide gap between his front teeth, he seems all-too-perfectly type-cast for the role)—but simply that the words seem too strong and too overtly fascist to come from an ordinary (supposedly 'objective') TV news-commentator.

As we watch and listen to his ravings, we wonder if perhaps he's a politician making a campaign speech on television, but throughout the entire sequence there is no indication that he is anything other than your usual friendly TV news-commentator. So, because

*An unsubstantiated rumor has it that the nude girl herself wrote the text delivered "out of synch" (in voice-over); on the other hand, paradoxically, the words she speaks "in synch" on the telephone might be "out of synch" with her own thoughts.

this film is 'set' in England, we wonder if perhaps to the English this guy is a well-known, easily identifiable newscaster notorious for his right-wing views—sort of an English Fulton Lewis, Jr. But nothing ever gives us any clues to his identity or indicates what interest he has personally in expounding these views. So we start to wonder just who is 'behind' him, whose words he is speaking, whose interests he is serving?

And these, of course, are questions Godard wants us to ask, not just about the 'information' provided in this sequence of *British Sounds*, but about all the 'information' fed us by television and cinema all the time. A newscaster's voice may be in synch, but Godard wants us to realize just what his words are 'in synch' with—the ruling class ideology. Granted the views expressed by the newscaster in this sequence are a bit more extremist than those we expect,* but the main point of this sequence is that the dissemination of 'information' is not in the service of the people, but in the service of the ruling class which controls the mass media and utilizes these resources to impose bourgeois ideology on the masses as a means of perpetuating control over them. And if the views expressed in the media are not normally so overtly and crudely fascist, it is simply because a cool, calm veneer of objectivity serves far better to lull the audience and to inculcate bourgeois ideology than would an aggressive harangue. But the goals are the same—to perpetuate the power and privilege of the ruling class and the exploitation and fragmentation of the working class.

By occasionally cutting away from the face of the newscaster to intercut shots of isolated workers going about their tasks, Godard graphically suggests the fundamental opposition between the working class and the mass-media lackeys of the ruling class, and suggests as well

*Program notes prepared by Godard (including his "auto-critique" on the film) indicate that the words spoken by the newscaster in this sequence are excerpted from speeches by "Wilson, Heath, Pompidou, Nixon, etc."

that what little coverage the mass media give to the working class is calculated to depict only the individual worker and to strictly avoid any depiction of the working class *as a class*. As for the sound track in this sequence, it is given over almost entirely to the ranting voice of the ruling class: no dissenting voice can even get a word in edgewise; and even at the very end of the newscaster's harangue, only the barest whisper is heard—as if it were spoken by a gutsy studio technician who nevertheless was afraid of getting caught—asking for the workers to “unite and strike.”

And in the very next sequence, it is made clear—*by a worker*—that the workers' interest lies *not* in striking merely to win this or that concession from the capitalist owners and managers, but in using general strikes as a political weapon to help overthrow the capitalist system itself. As a small group of English Ford workers discuss their problem, Godard finds a new way to dramatize what is ‘out of synch’ and what is ‘in synch’—he resolutely keeps the camera aimed away from whoever is speaking, except towards the end, when one worker (who seems to have the most highly developed political awareness of the group) articulates a clear analysis of the situation and formulates a firm proposal for action. The rest of the time, as the workers gropingly discuss some of their general grievances or speak resignedly of their plight, the camera endlessly pans around the room from one silent listener to another, boycotting whoever is speaking at that moment, as if to say “No, we’re still groping around in the dark; we’re still not speaking to the point; we’re not yet in synch with the situation.”

But when the camera finally focusses on the young worker who denounces demands for better deals within the capitalist system and calls instead for political organization and united struggle to overthrow capitalism, then, finally, for the first time in the film, everything really comes together in an authentic synchronous unity. There are no aural or visual interjections, no manipulation of the sound track. At this moment, image and sound are com-

pletely in synch. Moreover, the words, this time, are clearly in synch with the convictions of the person speaking and with his actions as well. He is involved at this very moment, among his fellow workers, in the very political organization he is talking about. And for once the speaker's words, thoughts, and deeds are all really in synch with his *needs*—not with the ersatz needs inculcated by capitalist ideology, but with his urgent need for creative, non-alienating, non-exploitative work-relations among his fellow men.

Structurally as well as thematically (thematically *because* structurally), this is the moment the film has been building up to—this is the moment which gets it all together, so to speak, and points out the path to be taken towards human wholeness. And, significantly, that way is pointed out to us by what Marx (as well as Lenin) considered to be the real guiding light of humanity—the avant-garde of the proletariat, the worker who matches a concrete experience of the situation with a concrete analysis of the situation.

From this point on—now that we see where the film's basic movement has been leading (as well as where a class-based political movement must lead)—*British Sounds* takes on a more joyful and lyrical tone, as we see in the final two sequences various ways in which students and practitioners of the various arts can contribute to the struggle for a new and more wholesome society. In the next-to-last sequence, a group of Essex University students are seen and heard making radical posters and discussing how to combat the bourgeois ideology of popular songs by rewriting their lyrics in a politically militant spirit. (The Beatles song that goes “You say yes, I say no” is changed to “You say Nixon, I say Mao,” then changed again to the more punning line “You say US, I say MAO.”) Meanwhile, during the synch-sound presentation of the students' activities, there is also a running voice-over commentary which raises theoretical questions on the ways of creating images and sounds that will oppose the images and sounds of capitalism.

This voice-over commentary—unlike most of the previous overlaid material—does not blot out or let in only a few fragments of the synchronous material, but rather serves as the theoretical complement to the social *praxis* of the students and artists whose activities are presented in a new, enriched synchronous unity which takes care not to neglect the urgent theoretical considerations which must be dealt with if we are to succeed in building new, non-alienating relations in society.

In this commentary, three types of films are distinguished: imperialist films, revisionist films, and revolutionary films. In an imperialist movie, the speaker tells us, the movie-screen sells the voice of the boss to the viewer: the voice lulls the viewer or it hammers away at him, but in either case it seeks to inculcate bourgeois ideology. In a revisionist movie, the screen is a loud-speaker for a voice that "represents" the people without at all being the actual voice of the people, since they still must sit in silence watching a distorted image of themselves. Finally, in a revolutionary film, the screen is merely a blackboard on which is presented a concrete analysis of a concrete situation: it is a learning device for both teacher and pupil and contains a healthy dose of self-criticism.

In the film's final sequence, we see in the image a close-up shot of a hand (Godard's)—covered with red paint, writhing along in a patch of mud and snow until it reaches out to grasp a stick with a red flag attached to it. Getting a firm grip on the stick at last, the hand raises the red flag and waves it triumphantly in the air, while, on the sound track, extracts from revolutionary songs from different countries ring forth. It is a lyrical finale—a piece of cinematic agit-prop theater that gives us the *feel* of revolutionary militancy as a necessary complement to the analytical *rationale* for revolutionary militancy that is provided by the body of the film. Finally, fist after fist is seen punching through a succession of paper Union Jacks, as voices on the sound track assert their solidarity with various British radical movements, and, in a parting shot at ideology, de-

nounce the "Gestapo of the old humanist university."

Conclusions: Pour ne pas conclure

Just as the conclusion of Godard's *British Sounds* does not seek in any way to sum up the film as a whole, but rather to provide us with a "send-off" (*envoi*) which brings us back out of the internal structure of the work of art and into our own everyday realm of social *praxis*; so, too, the conclusion of this essay seems to me to demand not a conclusion in the sense of a summing up, but rather conclusions (plural) to be drawn for future use in that part of our social *praxis* that we carry out as film-goers, film-critics, or film-makers.

And in this sense, I think there are a few striking conclusions to be drawn from *British Sounds* that deserve our attention—and, more important, our *use*. I don't claim that these conclusions are new or that they are uniquely to be drawn from *British Sounds*; but I do consider them grossly neglected in our general practice of cinema. I simply enumerate them here; they are presented, quite literally, for our future use and development:

(1) Relations between image and sound do not by any means have to be 'realistic' to bring us to grips with 'reality.'

(2) Relations among various sound-elements do not by any means have to be 'realistic' to bring us to grips with 'reality.'

(3) 'Reality' itself is a much-abused concept (inside the cinema as well as out) and should give way to a more *dialectical* concept. ["Don't say *nature*," wrote Engels, "say the *dialectics of nature*."]

(4) Cinema (and television) have a vast potential not merely for "reflecting reality" (which potential has always been tapped) but also for *analyzing* it (which potential has been tapped far too little).

(5) Cinema (and television), like all social *praxis*, are imbedded within class struggle. They must be analyzed in the light of class struggle because, in any case, they are a product of class struggle.